

# News Release

## *Rhode Island National Wildlife Refuge Complex*

Block Island NWR □ John H. Chafee NWR at Pettaquamscutt Cove □ Ninigret NWR □ Sachuest Point NWR □ Trustum Pond NWR  
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### For Immediate Release

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### **Deer management planning process underway for the Block Island and Ninigret National Wildlife Refuges, public comment sought.**

The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service is addressing how best to manage white-tailed deer on two National Wildlife Refuges in the State, and are seeking public participation and comment as part of the process. The areas being considered are the Block Island National Wildlife Refuge located in the Town of New Shoreham, RI, and the Ninigret National Wildlife Refuge in Charlestown, RI.

White-tailed deer are a native species on the mainland which are valued for their role in the environment and by many simply for the chance to see them. But very high densities of white-tailed deer raise questions about how they affect our natural communities, and other effects such as their relationship to ticks and the occurrence of Lyme disease, collisions with vehicles, and damage to landscaping and gardens.

A Draft Environmental Assessment, Draft Compatibility Determination and related documents which describe alternative methods considered in managing deer on these refuges will be available for public review and comment from November 8, 2011 through December 7, 2011. Copies will be posted on the Refuge website at [www.fws.gov/ninigret/complex](http://www.fws.gov/ninigret/complex), or can be viewed at the refuge headquarters in Charlestown and at local libraries in Charlestown and New Shoreham. The Draft Environmental Assessment describes the various alternatives considered, and identifies a draft preferred alternative, which would allow limited public hunting. A Draft Hunt Plan, which describes how deer hunting would be permitted under the Draft preferred alternative, will also be available for public comment.

Some people are surprised to learn that hunting is allowed on a National Wildlife Refuge, but these lands have been established not only to preserve wild places, but also to promote wildlife dependant recreation when compatible with the purposes for which the refuges were established.

Wildlife dependant recreation includes environmental education, wildlife observation, wildlife photography, wildlife interpretation, hunting and fishing. All National Wildlife Refuges in the State are open to fishing, and goose and dove hunting is allowed on a portion of the Trustum Pond National Wildlife Refuge in South Kingstown.

Prior to completing the documents, it will be important to consider any public comments, including any issues, concerns, opportunities, or suggested alternative deer management strategies. To facilitate the public comment process, two public workshops will be held during the public comment period. On Wednesday evening, November 9, 2011, a public workshop will be held at the Block Island school cafeteria in New Shoreham, Rhode Island from 6pm – 8pm. On Thursday evening, November 10, 2011, another workshop will be held at the Kettle Pond Visitor Center in Charlestown, Rhode Island from 6pm – 8pm. Various “stations” will be placed around the room where people can stop by anytime between 6pm and 8pm, and speak with refuge staff and State Division of Fish and Wildlife personnel, obtain copies of the Draft documents, and leave any comments or suggestions they wish to be considered.

Written public comments will be accepted from November 8, 2011 through December 7, 2011 and can be mailed or dropped off at:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Attn: Deer Management  
50 Bend Road  
Charlestown, RI 02813